DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 259 387 CS 209 158

AUTHOR Anderson, Philip M., Ed.
TITLE Uses of Literature.
INSTITUTION New England Association of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 44p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT The Leaflet; v83 n2 Spr 1984

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Critical Thinking; English Curriculum; *English Instruction; Ethical Instruction; *Imagination; *Literary Devices; *Literature Appreciation; Reading Comprehension; *Reading Skills; Secondary Education; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The seven articles in this issue are concerned with the various uses of literature and literature study in the English curriculum, specifically to enhance thinking, teach composition, educate the emotions, develop reading comprehension and critical reading skills, explore and develop morals, and evoke a common culture. The titles of the articles are (1) "The Real Basic: Educating the Imagination" (Edgar H. Thompson); (2) "Why Not Literature?" (Barry M. Maid); (3) "The Fit Reader: An Affective Approach" (Susan Monroe Nugent); (4) "Literature Classroom as a Community of Interpreters" (Eugene Smith); (5) "Why We Should Keep Teaching Huck" (Terrence D. Earls); (6) "Effective Ways to Build a Reading Environment" (Nicholas P. Criscuolo); and (7) "Applying Literary Devices and Techniques" (James P. Rhinesmith). (HOD)

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Volume 83 Number 2
Spring 1984

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THE LEAFLET

Journal of the New England Association of Teachers of English

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Published by the New England Association of Teachers of English three times during the school year. Subscription to *The Leaflet* is included in the annual membership dues ($10), which should be sent to Richard Phelps, P.O. Box 234, Lexington, MA 02173. Copies of *The Leaflet* are available from the New England Association of Teachers of English, P.O. Box 234, Lexington, MA 02173. Price: $3.00 (includes postage) for issues from Winter 1982 to the present; issues prior to Winter 1982 are $2.50 (includes postage). An index to *The Leaflet*, 1969-1981, is also available. Price: $5.00 (includes postage).

Manuscripts should be addressed to Philip M. Anderson, *The Leaflet*, Education Department, Box 1938, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912. See "Information for Authors" inside the back cover.

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The Leaflet

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Notes on this Issue:

The articles in this issue are concerned with the various uses of literature and literature study in the English curriculum. According to the following articles, literature can be used to enhance thinking, teach composition, educate the emotions, develop reading comprehension and critical reading skills, explore and develop morals, and evoke a common culture. All the authors argue for a broader definition and conception of literature study within the English curriculum. In an educational environment which appears increasingly hostile to "frills" such as literature study, the authors of these articles provide strong evidence for the continuing support of literature study as an educational "basic."

Philip M. Anderson

The Real Basic: Educating the Imagination

Edgar H. Thompson

Introduction

After surveying his lifetime in the English teaching profession, James E. Miller in *The English Curriculum Under Fire*, comes to the conclusion that the true basic in teaching English is educating the imagination. Some would say that the term "imagination" is vague, but Miller counters this possible criticism by saying that the word imagination is about as vague as the word basic.

I don't think English teachers would disagree with Miller's assessment, at least in their hearts. However, accepting the premise that educating the imagination is at the root of contemporary English instruction poses a serious problem for many teachers: How can you still teach the "basics" and educate the imagination? The solution to this problem involves using proven classroom strategies but going two steps further. Before I can describe these two additional steps, however, I first need to examine just exactly what the imagination is made of and what sparks it.

The Substance of Imagination

Jacob Bronowski in "The Reach of the Imagination" says that "to imagine means to make images and to move them about inside one's head in new ways" (p. 101). What then constitutes images? Susanne Langer essentially answers this question when she says our world is primarily a verbal one (Dowst, p. 3). We construct images with language, with words. This doesn't mean that all images are conceived or constituted in our minds with words. Jerome Bruner believes that reality is portrayed or created in the mind in three ways: through iconic or visual images, through enactive images based on movement, and through symbolic images based on language (Dowst, p. 4). Kenneth Dowst believes that symbolic representation is most important because it "aids, distorts, contradicts, and otherwise interacts with [the other] two modes of representation" (Dowst, p. 4). Without symbolic images composed of words, the potential of the other two kinds of images would be limited.

Language, then, seems to play a central part in the images that we create in our minds. Of course, words are abstract. Though they can stand for things that actually exist in reality, they also can take on a life of their own which allows us to manipulate ideas in ways that might not be possible on an everyday basis. The images created with words allow us "to play out . . . events which are not present to our sense, and thereby guard the past and create the future—a future that does not yet exist, and may never come to exist in that form" (Bronowski, p. 102). Words allow us the freedom to mani-

pulate ideas in new and intriguing ways. Words and language are the keys that not only open the door of imagination, they are the material that creates the imagination.

Manipulating the Imagination

Just plugging words into our students' heads is not enough if we want them to develop their imaginations. Our students need to learn how to manipulate words and language in certain creative ways. Though our students may never *become* poets, I think we want them to *think* somewhat like poets. Even our aspiring scientists, computer programmers, and fashion designers need to do this because what poets do is what all imaginative people do: they name things or as Robert Morgan puts it, they "see the fact in its undenominated clarity and give it voice, as for the first time, it speaks for all" (p. 7). In other words, a poet's or any imaginative person's job is to creatively reconstruct "from the rubble and wilderness of perception" what is in front of all of our eyes but most of us fail to see (p. 7).

In creating this new view of that which is commonplace, the poet does more than just rename things, however. A poet also makes comparisons, tying the new with the old so that we can better see the new vision. These comparisons are made by opposing items that may *not* at first seem to be related. However, as we discover a relationship between what we initially believed to be disparate items, we then define reality in new ways. For example, everyone has seen a butterfly. Many of us have also seen barley growing in a field, or at least we've seen some kind of grain or grass rolling in fields as the wind blows across it. Usually, we see a butterfly and a grain field as separate entities, but the Japanese poet Sora suggests a relationship in the following haiku that all of us are capable of seeing but usually don't:

> Up the barley rows
> Stitching, stitching them together
> A butterfly goes.

As a result of Sora's simple pairing of images, readers gain a greater and deeper understanding about the relationship between butterflies and barley fields, their movement against one another, their relationship to nature.

Induction, Intuition, and Imagination

How do we teach our students to name things, to oppose things in new ways, as Sora did, to create a new conception, a new definition of reality or possible realities? Some would say that if we provide students with a classroom environment rich in literature, rich in writing, and rich in discussion, that students will inductively figure out how to create new conceptions, to tie the old to the new, to juxtapose apparently dissimilar things in such a way that they can

see new relationships. Surely, a few of our better students can do this, but most of our students need help.

Contrary to what *A Nation at Risk: The Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education* would have us believe about the failures of education, students have been learning. Recent results from The National Assessment of Educational Progress reveal an increase in students' ability to comprehend what they've read. And why shouldn't we expect this? Students have been taught comprehension skills. They have *not*, however, been taught to reexamine the text they've just read to compare their initial assumptions about what they've read with what is actually in the text. They have also not been trained to extend their initial interpretations to their own experience and knowledge and, based on this synthesis, justify their initial interpretations (Starr and Bruce, p. 2). Going beyond the text, comparing what is in the text with one's own experience and knowledge, creating original and personal interpretations, and being able to justify these interpretations is a crucial part of being able to use the imagination.

Strategies to Educate the Imagination

How then can the gap be removed between what students can already do and what they need to do in order to exercise their imaginations? The solution to this dilemma is relatively simple: First, instead of expecting our students to inductively figure out what to do on their own, we need to give them some strategies or model for them some of the ways that this naming, opposing, and defining process, as Ann Berthoff (1981) describes it, can be accomplished. Second, beyond demonstrating for students a way to go about doing something, we also need to make sure that they actively engage in this process. The old adage "we learn by doing" is an old adage because it is true.

Accomplishing these two tasks involves nothing more than adapting some of the techniques you're already using. For example, model predictive reading for your students. First, read the title of a story and based on the title have your students make predictions about what they think the story will be about. Then write all of their predictions on a chalkboard board in an abbreviated fashion. Then read the first paragraph or section of the story to them, or have the students read it. Then ask them if any of the predictions they've made up to this point are confirmed or refuted. When they answer, insist that the students justify their responses by pointing to evidence in the text that supports their contentions. Proceed in this fashion through the rest of the story.

In modeling this strategy for your students, you're demonstrating an important part of the reading process: prediction (Smith, 1978). However, prediction is also an essential part of using the imagina-

tion. From the discussion generated by this predictive reading activity, your students will learn that not everyone makes the same predictions though there is usually a reasonable amount of agreement. You're beginning to acquaint students with knowledge they already have but don't know they have. You're also showing them how other students see things differently. You need to go one step further, however.

After modeling predictive reading for your students, have them select a story that they would like to share with other students. Then break the students into groups and have each student lead a predictive reading lesson with the other members of the group. By asking your students to actively engage in this process, as opposed to passively participating in a teacher led discussion, you're giving them a strategy where they can learn not only the value of predictions but also the way apparently unrelated ideas are put together. As your students make these connections, they are learning to use their imaginations. At the same time they are also improving their reading and speaking skills.

Other classroom techniques can also be easily adapted to improve your students' skill at manipulating their imaginations. For example, have your students respond in their journals to things they've read using the following three kinds of responses (distilled from techniques suggested by David Bleich, 1975):

1. In a few sentences or a paragraph write about your emotional response to what you've read. For example, did the selection upset you or did it make you joyous? Did you want to rip the pages out of the book and tear them into little bits or did you want to memorize passages because they rang so true?
2. Connect what you've read to your experience. What five associations can you make between what you've read and what has happened to you during your lifetime?
3. If you like a particular word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph, jot it down and try to figure out what it is that you like about this special passage. If a passage was unclear to you for some reason, identify its location and write down questions that you can ask in class.

A colleague of mine and I have both had good success in classes where we've used these kinds of journal entries. Not only do the students become more astute in their critical analysis of what they've read, their discussion in class is usually more lively and perceptive—and for good reason. They've been asked to actively manipulate their imaginations, to name, to oppose, and to define reality and their experience in new ways.

Conclusion

Educating the imagination doesn't mean a major change in your teaching. All you need to do is modify and adapt some of the instructional techniques you've used for years. Accomplishing this change only requires that you do what you're asking your students to do: use some imagination.

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Why Not Literature?

Barry M. Maid

How many of us have heard a colleague say, usually with a broad smile, "Thank goodness second semester is almost here. Now I can concentrate on literature." What is most interesting about statements like this is that teachers who make them usually have two sections of Freshman Composition on their teaching schedules. Situations like this have been possible because many schools, though the number is dropping, allow their teachers to use literature as a basis for the second semester writing course. The sigh of relief that accompanies the beginning of the spring semester is not a result of the fact that instructors will have any fewer freshman essays to read, but rather that they feel that they are on more comfortable ground. The importance of this simple realization is too often overlooked. The fact remains that most of us, myself included, have been trained in literature. We have almost no formal training in the teaching of writing, yet many of us teach writing more than we teach anything else. Some of us, like me, now teach writing exclusively. It is no wonder, therefore, that when given the opportunity to use literature, any literature, in the writing classroom, so many English teachers jump at the chance. Literature is something we know and are comfortable with. However, the most telling reason why so many of us feel a need to teach literature in a composition class is that literature provides a content for us in a course that appears to have no real content. (This is also one of the reasons so many English teachers choose to devote so much attention to grammar in their writing classes. Grammar provides a content.)

Left to their own devices, many teachers choose to include literature in a writing course. However, the question is continuously raised as to whether this is an effective way to teach writing. In response many English departments have prohibited their faculty from using literature in writing classes. To accomplish this, constraints have been placed on the basic syllabus of composition courses as a check to make sure that instructors are not spending the entire semester giving their students an introduction to literary analysis. Whatever an individual department's policy may be, the question is simple: Can, or should, we teach literature in a composition class? The answer which is emanating loudly from many of those who teach writing is a strong, "No." However, I'm not sure we should be so doctrinaire.

When I first began teaching, I taught some writing courses using traditional literature anthologies as readers. What I learned very quickly from my own experience was that if I had the class read a short story and then attempted to teach that story as a piece of

literature, I was wasting everybody's time. Most of my students did, indeed, learn to talk about the story as a literary artifact. However, they learned nothing about the writing process, and that is, after all, why they were sitting in my class. Of course, there is nothing wrong, and indeed much right, about teaching students to understand and appreciate a story for its literary value. That is not, however, an effective method for teaching students to themselves become sound writers. By attempting to inject literature as literature into the curriculum of a writing course, we are not only cheating our students, but, perhaps even more important, we are not doing our jobs. By doing so we imply that our chosen course of study is so important that we feel perfectly comfortable in injecting it into a course where it does not belong. Few of us would have problems saying that one who taught chemistry and quizzed students on Avogadro's number, Boyle's Law, and the like, in a writing class was not truly following the intent of the course.

Yet, somehow we have the idea that because literature is produced by the act of writing, it is therefore justifiable to include it in our writing classes. This same logic would justify the inclusion of cereal box copy, psychology textbooks, and the *Critique of Pure Reason* into the curriculum of a composition course since all three were also produced by the act of writing. As strange as it may seem, doing so may not be such a bad idea. If we decide to let in literature, perhaps we should let in all forms of writing. This is in fact one problem I have with banning literature from composition classes. My feeling is that we should be inclusive rather than exclusive in what we do in the classroom. Yet the same teachers who are comfortable with teaching *Othello* to their freshman composition class will likely cringe at the thought of assigning the latest issue of *Spiderman*. If we look at the situation more closely, we will discover that the distinction those teachers are making is one of literary quality. That distinction is a valid one in a course whose subject is literature, but holds much less weight in a writing class. While it is ludicrous to assert that all pieces of writing are equal, it is highly sensible to claim that in a writing class where the subject of the course is the writing process itself, all levels and kinds of writing become legitimate examples or points of departure for discussion on the course's real subject—writing.

This, then is the crux of the issue of whether literature should be allowed into the composition classroom. Literature as literature must remain anathema, but literature as writing is a different story. The problem that most writing teachers face, and ironically the joy they experience, is that anything is fair game in the writing classroom. And anything can, and I see no reason it should not, include literature.

Perhaps the best way to explain my perspective of the problems and the successes one can have in the composition classroom when using different kinds of readings is what I call "A Tale of Two Colleges." While working on my dissertation, I supported myself by teaching part-time at two different schools. One semester in particular, though I was teaching essentially the same freshman composition course at both schools, the courses took on a very different character from one another. This difference was primarily determined by the readers I used. At one school I chose a text I had high hopes for. It was Paul J. Dolan and Edward Quinn's *The Sense of the Seventies* (Oxford, 1978). Dolan and Quinn did an excellent job of putting together an anthology with extraordinarily interesting pieces of writing by a wide range of good writers. The problem was that all these essays were interesting to me; my students cared absolutely nothing for them.

Does that sound familiar? Was it my fault? Was I somehow the contributing factor in turning that class into the kind of freshman composition class I dreaded the most—a course which is reminiscent of the ones I suffered through when I was a freshman? Around halfway through the semester one particular incident which stands out in my mind occurred. One of the essays I was teaching that day was entitled "Send Your Children to the Libraries." It was written by Arthur Ashe, the tennis player, and had originally appeared in the *New York Times* "Sunday Sports Section." I recalled having read the essay when it originally appeared. I also remembered that the *Times* had printed letters commenting on the essay on several subsequent Sundays. I mentioned this piece of information to the class and asked for a volunteer to go to the library to look up the responses to Ashe's essay and then to report on those responses to the class. To my surprise the only student who raised his hand was a young man who had been attending class on the average of twice every three weeks. Since this student was also a member of one of the school's athletic teams, I thought the supposedly appropriate content had finally helped. I began to think that I might actually be getting through to somebody. After class I talked to him and gave him all the information I could to help him find the material. I also told him that if he had any problems to check with the reference librarian, or if he preferred, I even volunteered to go to the library with him after the next class meeting to help him get started. Perhaps finally getting to the library, he became so entranced by what he found there that he got lost. For all I know, he may still be there. He never returned to my class. So much for reaching students with appropriate content.

If that had been my only teaching experience that semester, I might have started to question why I was in the classroom at all. This, however, is a "Tale of Two Colleges." At the other school I was teaching a course that was specifically designed to be a freshman

composition course in which the students were supposed to read "Imaginative Writing"; that translates to literature. I had taught the course before, always from a rather traditional perspective, and usually with traditional results. This time, I decided to do it differently. For a reader I chose Oliver Evans and Harry Finestone's *The World of the Short Story: Archetypes in Action* (Knopf, 1971). While this anthology includes many of the traditionally anthologized Western writers such as Guy de Maupassant, Thomas Mann, D.H. Lawrence, and Robert Penn Warren, it also includes a sizable portion of stories by non-Western writers as well—people such as Junichiro Tanizaki of Japan, Mohammed Mrabet of Morocco, and Efua Theodora Sutherland of Ghana.

This particular reader, organized around specific archetypes, had a great effect on what I chose to do. I let the archetypes dominate the discussion. I felt no compunction to keep bringing the class back to the story we were supposed to be discussing as long as we were discussing something which had to do with the appropriate archetype. Drawing on the classroom experience, I assigned paper topics which gave students the option to use the assigned stories, though I encouraged them to write their papers from a non-literary perspective. The following is an example of one of the early assignments:

> The literary archetype which we are presently discussing is the scapegoat. For your next short, 2-3 page (500-750 word) paper, I want you to write about one particular example of the scapegoat. Though you may choose an example from the stories we have read, I strongly suggest that you find your example elsewhere.
>
> What you should be doing in this paper is to present an example of a scapegoat, explain why this individual or group is indeed a scapegoat, and finally analyze what function that particular scapegoat has. Caution: Just to assert that the function is that of the scapegoat is not enough.

This story, like all good tales, has a happy ending. Many of the papers I received were wonderful.

I anticipated a large number of "so what's" in response to my tale. Aside from my own perverse pleasure attained from failing where I should have succeeded and succeeding where I should have failed, that was my own initial reaction to the situation. It makes a nice story to tell colleagues, but what good is it? Since all of this was taking place at the time I was beginning to consider myself a teacher of writing, rather than a teacher of literature who happened to be teaching writing, I tried to understand if there were any reasons for what had happened.

After thinking about it, I concluded that what happened was that the essays I assigned from the *Sense of the Seventies* failed because they were either too dated or too topical. Because the reader features essays which spanned an entire decade, those pieces

which were written in the early seventies had almost no meaning to my students in the late seventies. While the fault may lie more with the students themselves, or with their backgrounds, it is nonetheless a problem and must be faced. The other essays, those written later in the decade, tend to be on topical subjects. As many teachers are already aware, topical subjects are most often useless in the classroom. We can see this at work if we look at a subject which is presently controversial such as abortion. A discussion on abortion in a composition classroom is usually a disaster. Students might get excited and may even participate more readily than on other topics, but they will simply restate the tired arguments on both sides of the issue. No minds will change. No thought or analysis will take place. Abortion is controversial, not because people fail to analyze the arguments or to argue logically, but rather because both sides of the issue are derived from very different basic premises. Since the acceptance of one or the other basic premise is very often determined by one's worldview, the only way for minds to move from the arguments which they believed when the students walked into the classroom is to change worldviews.

Having acknowledged the limitations of the approach which uses only essays as readings, where does literature fit in? I think the key to the successful use of literature, or any kind of readings, in the composition classroom lies in providing a context. The context of the archetypes overcame the fact that the content of many of the stories was both foreign and esoteric for many of my students. Any context, no matter how artificial or contrived, is helpful. It provides a security blanket for the student and very often for the teacher. This is true even when the context is the writing process itself, the true content of the course.

How, then, do we devise a subject-oriented writing course? Since the purpose of the course is to make the students proficient in writing, not in the subject, a wide latitude in subject treatment is possible. My own opinion is that it is best to focus on a rather limited topic. Since the readings should provide background and points of departure for discussion, they should be chosen with the following goals in mind: 1. They must be fairly elementary in terms of sophistication because the students cannot be expected to have a background in the subject. 2. They should have a definite point of view. They should say something. If all we are looking for is a survey of material, we might as well use an introductory textbook. 3. They must be placed in some kind of context by either the editor of the book or else by the classroom teacher. 4. They must lead somewhere. This is crucial because the primary difference between this kind of course and a more traditional course is that here the student should understand that he is writing a paper to make a point rather than to demonstrate proficiency in a particular rhetorical mode.

There are currently very few anthologies that do this. In the early and mid-seventies some content-oriented readers were published, but few are still in print. Some of the readers evolving from the Writing across the Curriculum movement may provide suitable options. However, I would like to mention one of the survivors of the earlier round of content-oriented readers. Though it could stand to use some updating, David Adams Leeming's *Flights: Readings in Magic, Mysticism, Fantasy, and Myth* (Harcourt, 1974) provides an interesting classroom possibility. While the subject of Leeming's text may appear either appealing or repugnant, its true strength lies in its variety of selections (both literary and expository), its organization, and its list of additional readings. Leeming has grouped the selections in each of his four sections to fit into three categories: theoretical, practical, and literary. At the end of the book is a list of additional readings for each topic so that students have some idea of where to start a research project.

Flights is no panacea, though I do think it is even better than the readers I used based on archetypes. It provides minimal content so that students gain at least some rudimentary knowledge about an area. The bibliography helps to make extended assignments, such as research papers, a natural extension of the course and not merely a contrived exercise. Books, like *Flights*, can serve to help alleviate a multitude of the problems in freshman composition. They provide an "artificial content" and they appropriately blend literature with expository prose.

If we are then to allow our students to read and perhaps even write about literature, how are we to do so? Is writing about literature somehow different from writing about anything else? Looking at publishers' catalogs and the tables of contents of many freshman rhetorics, one would think so. There is a proliferation of books like Edward J. Gordon's *Writing about Imaginative Literature* (Harcourt, 1974) and Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing about Literature* (Little, Brown, 1968). One would expect that these books would not be appropriate in a freshman composition course, but if the teachers see the subject as literature, anything is possible. This becomes even more clear when surveying freshman rhetorics by such respected writing people as Maxine Hairston and Ross Winterowd. Hairston's *A Contemporary Rhetoric* (Houghton Mifflin, 1982) and Winterowd's *A Contemporary Rhetoric* (Harcourt, 1981) both have chapters which deal with writing about literature. The most striking characteristic of these chapters is that they look like shortened versions of Barnet or Gordon. One can find an alternative to this writing about literature syndrome, however, in Gregory and Elizabeth Cowan's *Writing* (Wiley, 1980). In Cowan and Cowan's section on writing about literature, the questions they suggest that a student ask about a piece of literature are traditional ones; however,

when they start talking about actually writing the essay about a piece of literature, certain points stand out. In the section entitled, "The Shaping Stage," three sentences are printed in boldface type. They are, "The first step in the *Shaping Stage* of an essay on literature is the formulation of a *purpose* and a *thesis*" (p. 503). "The thesis will be the main idea, point, assertion you make in the essay" (p. 503). "Perhaps the most important thing you need to remember about the development of the essay is to fill it up with details" (p. 504). Then in a section called the "Completing Stage," they say, "You want the essay to be free of all errors. You want it to flow smoothly from one point to the next. You will want to add concrete details when you revise during the completing stage if you have been too abstract" (p. 504). Certainly this is good advice even though it appears not to talk specifically about literature.

Despite the fact that too many students and teachers feel that writing about literature is somehow inherently different from writing about anything else, in a freshman composition course an essay which might have a work of literature as its subject, or which uses literary examples to prove a thesis, is essentially no different from any other freshman composition essay. That is undoubtedly my most important point. For our primary purpose in any composition course must be to teach our students to understand and to control their own writing so that they can effectively communicate a specific meaning through the medium of the written word. Once we acknowledge that our objective in the composition class is to teach our students that meaning and communication are the twin goals of the writing process, many other problems fall into place. For example, facile thought becomes unacceptable because it has little meaning. Failure to adhere to basic literacy conventions is also unacceptable because it can interfere with both meaning and communication.

Likewise, since most of us believe that the three skills of reading, writing, and thinking are intertwined, it makes sense that we attempt to nurture them together. It makes sense to use some kind of readings in freshman composition. Whether the selections are literary or not makes no difference. What does matter is that the selections appear in some form of context, and that instructors never lose sight that their true content is the writing process itself. So to the question of including literature in the composition classroom, I can honestly answer, "Why not?" But we must remember there exists the more difficult question of how literature is to be handled in the composition classroom. To that my response is, "Very carefully."

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The Fit Reader: An Affective Approach

Susan Monroe Nugent

The subjective or affective approach to literature is based on the belief that literature remains only words on a page without a reader. It is the reader, then, who makes the literature more than print. To give the reader this significant role concerns many teachers of literature. Does this mean that our students know as much as we do? Does this mean that our students no longer need us? That they can read literature without us? That the literature is no longer important?

Any answer to these questions means that we must re-examine our role in the classroom. *If* we decide to use the affective approach, then we must concern ourselves with how to structure this approach in classes. This article discusses a subjective approach to literature as developed by David Bleich, Stanley Fish, and others. Following a review of the theory, structured activities are suggested based upon my experiences with use of this approach in the classroom.

Using the subjective approach to literature, the student responds to the literature with a written response statement. The response statements advocated by Bleich have three components: perception, affect, and association. The perception is what the readers think happens in the literature, the affect is what the readers feel about what they think happens in the literature, and the association is what the readers remember as a result of the perception and affect. For instance, after reading "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," one reader may perceive a pensive speaker who she feels she would like to meet. Because she has perceived the speaker as pensive, and feels she would like to know him, she is reminded of a conversation she had with an aquaintance, someone she wanted to know better but had not seen recently. Another student reading the same poem may perceive the speaker as lonely and feel sorry for him. He may remember the lonely feeling of visiting his grandfather in a nursing home. Each of these readers would respond to other perceptions, affects and associations for this poem, making the response statements much more involved.

The affective approach does not lead the readers away from the literature, but rather helps them work with the literature. As the readers record each perception, affect, and association, they must think about, and feel about, each perception. The literature is not complete in itself; each reader must become involved with it.

After each student has written a response statement, considering perception, affect, and association, these statements can be viewed to see similarity of responses. Students become aware of the commonality of response. For example, in "Stopping by Woods," many readers perceive the speaker as either lonely or pensive, and some

admit that no easy solution is available. Through the sharing of statements, the readers find others who not only agree with their perceptions, but who are also struggling with the literature. Each student gains a sense of being part of a larger group, yet preserves individuality. The individual and/or group responses can lead to other areas of study such as examinations of author's background, archetypes, or form-content issues. Subjective responses can be a stepping off point rather than a stopping point.

Another underlying principle, in addition to the commonality of readers, is the belief that the student has something important to say about the literature. Within this perspective, a reader is capable of making an honest discovery about the literature, and sharing something new and important with the teacher and class. It is this principle that makes us as teachers re-examine our roles. Once we accept that our students can say something important about the literature, we realize we are no longer the lone repository of knowledge, no longer hold all the proper perceptions.

After I re-evaluated my role within the classroom, I worked at relating the field of psycholinguistics and the reading process to that of subjective criticism. The result has been modification of the response statement approach. The principle change is the addition of prereading activities designed to stimulate the quantity and quality of the perceptions, affects, and associations.

The rationale for prereading activities is offered by many proponents of the psycholinguistic approach including Kenneth Goodman and Harold Herber. Goodman states that the reader "brings to his reading the sum total of his experience and his language and thought development" (1976:375-376) and later suggests that skill in reading involves broadening experiences (1976:378). Thus, we need to help our students bring more experiences to the written page. We can, using Bruner's concepts, activate the categories (1973:15) that our students need to use by helping them bring out-of-class experiences to bear on in-class activities. The student needs to be thinking about the subject *before* reading. Another reading specialist, Harold Herber, concludes, "A student who looks for ideas as he reads will find them; but if he looks for nothing he finds that too!" (1970:33). Our work is to encourage readers to look for something while reading. We must give them a reading purpose.

The following sample of a four step exercise used before reading John Updike's "Ex-Basketball Player" illustrates the above principles in practice.

Section I. Activating Categories

A. What qualities or characteristics do heroes have? Discuss.

B. Who would you consider a hero? Does this person have all or some of the qualities or characteristics listed above? Discuss.
C. Who was the hero of the basketball team at your high school? College? What became of that person? Discuss.
D. Did (or does) this person have the qualities of a hero? Discuss.

Section II. Expressing Attitudes

If you were writing about _____, the star of your high school basketball team, what information would you include? Check any of the following ideas that you would include. (To be discussed after checking)

A. _____ remains a hero throughout his life.
B. _____ never learns a trade.
C. _____ 's basketball skills are essential to his career.
D. His basketball records are broken within five years of leaving high school.
E. The Celts, Bullets, or Nuggets try to draft him.
F. _____ 's high point in life was his high school basketball success.

Section III. Generating Information

Generate two more statements you would include in writing about _____.

1.
2.

Discuss.

Section IV. Reading Purpose

Read the poem, "Ex-Basketball Player," to find which of the above statements or ideas Updike includes in writing about Flick Webb. "Ex-Basketball Player" depicts the life of Flick Webb, once the high school's star player. The speaker, one who remembers Flick's outstanding abilities, observes Flick, now a gas attendant, both on and off duty. The contrasts of now and then create a dismal view of Flick's existence. The theme is one that Updike explores further in his novels. This poem first appeared in *The New Yorker*. Updike included it in his collection of poems, *The Carpentered Hen and Other Tame Creatures*, published in 1957. "Ex-Basketball Player" appears in several anthologies including *Different Drummers* (Random House, 1973) and *Muse of Fire* (Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1971).

Rationale for Exercises:

Each of the four sections in the prereading exercise has a definite function. Section I, Activating Categories, results in the students bringing more to the written page because they are thinking about

the subject before they read. This section starts with general discussion of a subject, and becomes more and more specific. Here, I started with qualities of heroes, ending with the qualities of a specific person, a basketball star remembered. The comparison of general heroic qualities with qualities of basketball stars can lead in many directions. One of the most interesting discussions ended with a statement that Bill Walton is greater than his basketball ability/career. He has the qualities of a hero, but not all because of basketball. The completion of this section, then, helps the student become more aware of the topic. Therefore, there will be more and better perceptions.

Section II asks the student to start expressing an attitude toward the subject. Indeed, the student is involved with affects before reading. The person who says the basketball hero remains a hero throughout life will argue heatedly with the student who believes the high point of the basketball star's life was his high school success. These discussions point out that the students have gone beyond thinking only of one person, and are now expressing their feelings toward the subject.

While Section II presents material that is directly related to the literature (either because of its presence or absence in the literature), Section III, Generating Information, forces the student to go beyond any information supplied by me, the teacher. Here, each person is generating perceptions and affects concerning the general topic. Here, students often express their feelings toward athletes in general. One student may dislike athletes because they got the college scholarships while another may think that "Jocks get a raw deal. They're exploited." This involvement with perception and feelings before reading causes more responses to the literature after reading. Also, this provides the opportunity for the readers to state, discuss, and understand their attitudes toward, and perceptions of, a subject before encountering an author's attitude, or a speaker's perception. This enables readers to better express well-formulated perceptions and affects.

In Sections I to III, associations are required of the reader. It is this area of association that seems most foreign to the students. Without associations before reading, my students deny that they have any experiences in their background that might be like Flick Webb's. With these associations before reading, they remember many incidents related to the poem. Some remember that the first days or weeks in new surroundings and the problems of adjusting to a place where no one knows all about you. Others recall times when they were told they were "the best." They also remembered that "best actor in the senior play" often was followed by the discovery that "best" is a relative term.

To make such associations means to see the universal in the literature. While this principle at times is exceedingly difficult for the students to grasp, these prereading activities help. Over an extended period of time using associations, they find that not only are they reminded of incidents friends have talked about, but they, too, are similar to Flick Webb.

Section IV, Reading Purpose, asks the student to look for something while reading. Too often, we ask students to read without giving them a reason to read. They don't know if we will be asking the global "What did you think of . . ." or the specific "Explain the symbols of death in . . . ." The purpose given makes readers more secure; at least they know what my first series of questions will entail. And their perceptions, affects, and associations will include answers to these questions.

Each of these sections is designed to improve the perceptions, affects, and associations of the reader. Like Bleich, Fish, and Holland, I believe that the reader must interact with the literature. The response statements advocated by Bleich are founded in the theory that the reader has something to say about the literature. I agree with this. However, many of my students need structured activities to help them respond to the literature. They need to have categories activated in order to make honest discoveries. If the student starts by expressing personal perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and associations related to the literature, the student and teacher will have more to say after reading the literature. Because we have been discussing these ideas, hearing arguments for and against our own beliefs, we will be better able to express our perceptions, affects, and associations after reading the literature.

In conclusion, the prereading activities suggested here help students formulate not only longer but better response statements. As with any teaching aid, the student can and should be weaned from their use. My ultimate aim is to have readers formulate their own questions, and then read, respond, and interact with the literature. By involving my students initially in prereading activities, I can facilitate their understanding of the need for interaction with the literature. In articulating the percepts, affects, and associations, the fit reader can effectively shut out interferences, activate necessary categories, and read for a purpose. My goal is to increase the fitness of readers.

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The Literature Classroom as a Community of Interpreters

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Most of the high school English teachers I know took their undergraduate degrees at least ten years ago, when college literature courses tended to be taught according to principles of the New Criticism. Elements of literary technique were emphasized, with details about the author's life and about the historical period either suppressed or regarded as only marginally relevant to a proper, rigorous reading of text.

As a consequence of sitting in courses where literature was treated as object suitable for dissection, teachers-to-be often carried that approach into their high school classes. Plot, character, theme, and symbol became the benchmarks for planning lessons, conducting class discussions, and formulating writing assignments. High school students, the assumption had it, could be inducted into the understanding and higher enjoyment of literature by practicing, even in diluted form, the types of exegesis that prevailed in college English departments.

But by the 1970's the New Criticism had lost its hegemony as the dominant critical theory. Structuralism from Europe and Deconstructionism in Europe and the United States were two of the competing approaches advocated by literary critics, at least for purposes of written criticism. Other ways of speaking and writing about literature were at least being tolerated in college English departments.

One of the most promising of these, as far as high school literature teachers and classes are concerned, is reader-response criticism. (*After the New Criticism*, by Frank Lentricchia (University of Chicago Press, 1980), traces some of the major critical movements of the past twenty years. Two collections of essays that can be classified as reader-response critical theory are *Reader-Response Criticism; From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, edited by Jane P. Tompkins (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). and *The Reader in the Text; Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, edited by Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton University Press, 1980).) Though not always called that, it has at least a forty-year history in the United States. Louise Rosenblatt published *Literature as Exploration* in 1938, articulating a belief that the experience of reading literature should be an intense form of personal activity, not a passive absorption of information about literary technique and of interpretations whose validity was largely dependent upon a teacher's assertion and superior knowledge. Although Rosenblatt was very influential with her students—prospective and practicing teachers

of English in the eastern United States—and with some members of the National Council of Teachers of English, few of her ideas penetrated the minds of textbook writers or makers of local curricula.

In the early 1970's, Alan Purves tried to demonstrate an application of Rosenblatt's ideas with what he called a response-centered literature curriculum. In *How Porcupines Make Love*, he addressed teachers provocatively and with the heady confidence of the values upheavals from the 60's, urging them to stimulate and enliven response by using film, collage, drama, informal talk and free forms of writing. He also edited the Ginn junior-senior high school literature series *Responding*, which put these ideas into lesson-sized form. Nothing could be farther from the New Criticism in both method and intent.

In the present more cautious, sometimes repressive, times, Purves's enthusiasm probably seems naive or at least inappropriate. Yet there are less flamboyant methods that teachers can use to keep literature study from becoming a desiccated version of the New Criticism. And an understanding of these methods might well begin with a central question for any teacher of literature: Where does the literary work exist? Is it the actual print of the novel, short story, or poem? Is the text itself the work of literature?

Or does the literary work exist in the mind and imagination of each reader—a somewhat different work for each reader, depending on that reader's non-literary experience, sophistication in reading, and ability to enter a text imaginatively? Reader-response theory suggests that it is, indeed, in the interaction between text and reader that the literary work assumes its dynamic existence, so that *The Red Badge of Courage* or "Auto Wreck" is not the same work for any two readers or even the same work on successive readings by one individual.

If this sounds hopelessly "subjective" and antithetical to any concept of "better" or "worse" readings of a text, let us not dismiss the premise too soon as foolish. It forces us to specify what we denote by the term "meaning in literature." Whereas some critics like E.D. Hirsch assert that the validity of meaning in a work of literature can be found only by knowing the author's intention, the the reader-response critic claims that we can never really know the author's intention. Furthermore, for non-specialist readers of literature, it is not a single or most valid meaning that is significant. What is significant is the role the text can play in illuminating or extending each reader's imaginative grasp of human experience. How the text connects with the fledgling readers *now* is what interests them most; the effects of that connection are likely to be longer lasting and more deeply impressive than what a teacher can tell them about what the text is *supposed* to mean.

A teacher's knowledge of literature and of penetrating ways of reading it can be deployed differently from his or her assuming the role of authoritative interpreter. Instead, the teacher can become a model and a guide for the asking of questions, those questions designed to help young readers make their own meanings with literary texts. The literary classroom becomes a community of interpreters, a place where meanings can be shared and challenged, and not a place where everyone is coerced into finding the "right" interpretation.

Let's visualize this principle in action in a secondary school classroom. Let's say that Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" seemed a likely choice for a tenth grade class, both because it is short and dramatic in its potential impact and because it connects with the class's discussions on the theme of conflict and war. (Thematic teaching of literature seems especially likely to provide a congenial environment for reader-response criticism, though it is not an indispensable condition for it.)

The teacher reads the poem two or three times, the students visually following the printed text (either projected on a screen or on individual copies). Intervals of silence precede each rereading, perhaps enhanced by the teacher's suggestion, "Try to let the poem create images for you. If the poem seems to draw you into the 'I,' let it happen."

Discussion might start right after these readings, or it could be postponed to the next class period, allowing time for the poem to "work," to penetrate to inner layers of consciousness. When discussion does commence, it may center on the situation in which the I of the poem finds himself. It might in fact start with the question, "Is the I male? How do you know?" Then, "Why is the I giving an account of an event that preceded his death? Who might 'they' be? How does the I seem to feel about his death?" These questions seek to explore students' reactions to the non-literal stance of the poem's narrator, encouraging them to state both that it is not possible to write this poem after death and that the willing reader can make such an act seem possible.

Next, a series of invitations allows students to react to specific words and phrases in the poem. "Since 'State' is capitalized, what does it probably refer to? In what respect is it possible to fall into a State, as opposed to, say, a state of anxiety? Is 'sleep' likely to mean something other than the usual period of evening slumber? How would you paraphrase this first line?

"What are the possible meanings of 'belly' and does 'its' seem more likely to refer to 'State' or 'mother's sleep'? What do you suppose 'my wet fur' refers to, and what would make it freeze?

"At 30,000 feet above the earth, how might it seem that life is dreamed and who is doing the dreaming? Had the I been asleep,

perhaps in some non-literal sense? If 'black flak' is the puffs of smoke caused by guns on other airplanes, who are the 'nightmare fighters' and could they be related to the dream of the preceding line?

"How much time and what events probably intervene between the events of the fourth line and those described in the fifth? What feeling do you now have, at the end of the poem, about the I's state of mind? And how do you feel about what has happened to the I? Are you tempted to draw any conclusion about the significance of what this poem seems to say? Does it have any parallel in your own experience or with anything else you have read?"

A teacher prepared to ask a prolonged series of questions like this is, of course, encouraging a close reading of the text, as New Critics advised, but the readers' attention is constantly drawn to their own ability to make meanings from the text and to their natural need to connect these meanings with their own previous experiences and accumulations of knowledge. As the teacher asks such questions, s/he may occasionally want to inject a possible answer or piece of information that may be relevant to shaping an answer, but s/he will probably suppress any statement that sounds like a definitive interpretation or an outright preference for one student's interpretation. This unwillingness to act as authority will no doubt be bothersome to students accustomed to the teacher's stance as determiner of correctness or incorrectness. To assume the more ambiguous role, however, is essential to developing students' confidence in their own ability to interpret literary meanings.

None of the questions in the preceding series deals directly with poetic techniques, such as rhythm, or technical terms like metaphor, anapest, and iamb. These matters are clearly less important to the understanding of Jarrell's poem than is the imagery, but they could be included in the questioning. In the discussion arising from feelings the poem arouses, these questions may be appropriate: "Notice that only two words rhyme—*froze* and *hose*. Does the rhyme seem accidental, or is there some way that the rhyme emphasizes or encourages a certain emotion in you? Read the poem to yourself several times, paying particular attention to the rhythms of each line. Do you notice any regularity or repetition of accent patterns? Are there certain words or phrases which the rhythm almost forces you to pay special attention to? If so, are they words that seem especially important for creating images and feelings? Or does it it seem to you that every word in the poem is equally important? If not, which ones could be changed without altering the effect of the poem on you?"

If technical terms of poetry come up in the discussion that such questions stimulate, they may be somewhat helpful in specifying

and explaining how the poem achieves its effects. But the terms themselves need assume no prominence, nor should students conclude that the poem cannot be fully experienced unless the terms are used.

A similar procedure applies to longer works of fiction, always after a full reading of the text. A short story to be discussed by the whole class can be read orally or silently during one class period, preferably preceded only by a brief explanation of why it is being read, such as, "Today, I'd like you to read Ambrose Bierce's 'The Coup de Grace,' a story set on a Civil War battlefield. It deals with three men, one of whom is seriously injured. The story may perplex you, but it may also draw you into the conflicts and feelings that war produces."

No list of vocabulary need be presented on the chalkboard and no list of study questions need anticipate the details of the story. These intrusive pedagogical devices are not part of a naturalistic literary experience and serve more to reduce than to increase students' engagement with the text.

The story should be read completely at least once, though a second reading might well occur before any discussion starts in order to allow time for students to integrate the probable initial shock of reading the story and to begin the process of reflecting on its possible meanings. The literary experience should not be rushed. A teacher might then simply want to invite several students to respond to the question, "Is this story shocking? Why?" Arranging the class into groups of four or five each might be the best setting for registering reactions to the questions, both so that everyone can have a chance to express an oral reaction and to assume somewhat greater comfort in expressing what is likely to be strong feeling.

After fifteen minutes or so of small-group exchange of initial reactions, the teacher may resume as questioner, with a series of questions aimed at eliciting students' perceptions of the relationships among the three characters, the motivation of Captain Madwell for thrusting his sword into Sergeant Halcrow's agony-ridden body, and the many-layered significance of the phrase "the rite of uttermost compassion, the *coup de grace.*" A question designed to connect the actions and motives of this story with students' lives could use The Good Samaritan as a link: "Have you ever wanted to do a Good Samaritan act but recoiled because you thought the act might actually cause harm or compromise you? Should a stroke of mercy be a willed and calculated act?" Since a question like this is calculated to precipitate many specific and personal memories, it can be the bind for a writing assignment that follows from preliminary discussion. As soon as the teacher can feel momentum developing in students' recollections of related experiences, the request to write can be made, perhaps in these

words: "We have begun to demonstrate that the situation in 'The Coup de Grace' is applicable not just to soldiers on a Civil War battlefield. Bierce has managed to give us a dramatic sketch of dilemmas that many people face, sometimes involving life and death, other times not involving such drastic consequences. I want you to use the essay form to explain an incident which you experienced directly or which is known to you at second hand. Try to show how that incident may have involved a decision similar to Captain Madwell's. And remember that you are addressing your essay to other students in this class, as well as to students in my other literature and writing classes. They, as well as I, will be reading and commenting on them."

The early drafting of this essay will preferably occur in the classroom, where the teacher may provide needed assistance and assure concentration. But when the drafts are either complete or far enough along to be sharable, students reassemble in small groups to read them to each other. The teacher provides two or three discussion-focusing questions, such as, "What are two or three words or phrases that have greatest impact on you? Does the writer build the essay so as to clarify for you why the writer thinks those phrases are important? Are there parts of the essay that seem to need elaboration? Do you sense a strong connection between Bierce's story and the writer's experience?"

When each writer has gotten reactions and suggestions for revision from others in the small group, writing continues, either in class or out of class. Students at that point know the deadline for completion and also know that the finished essays will be read in their own class and in others. This knowledge helps to assure a sense of audience for the writing and permits the teacher the opportunity to subject students' responses to still further class discussion, both as to ideas and to techniques of writing. (Portions of some essays or entire essays can be duplicated for this purpose when oral reading may reduce the effectiveness of discussion, or essays may be circulated round robin.)

Because much of the earlier discussion and the intensive period of writing have concentrated on connections between the story and students' own lives, the expected result is a deepening of each student's emotional and intellectual involvement with the story. The in-class drafting process allows opportunity for raising further questions about the significance and interpretation of the story but does not coerce any particular interpretation. The follow-up reading of the essays by many students encourages still further questioning and reflection on what this literary text means. Plurality of meanings is therefore demonstrated but within a context of careful scrutiny and responsible support for interpretations.

When the literary work to be read and interpreted is a novel, new kinds of strategic considerations become important. Because even a short novel like *The Red Badge of Courage* requires several days of reading time and because students' different reading speeds complicate the scheduling for discussion, the teacher needs to find a tactic for both encouraging and delaying students' expressions of response. The common tactic of reading a few chapters at a time and having discussions after each segment assures that response to the whole novel will be distorted. Such discussions force readers into premature formulation; they are unable to feel the cumulative, highly personal building of impressions that is the central experience of reading a novel.

Assuming the usual diversity of reading speeds in a high school class, the teacher might well use small groups prominently to promote the reading process. These groups of four or five students each can have the single assignment of reading the book straight through, with a deadline for completion of the first reading. Students who read very slowly can get assistance from a faster reader in the group, someone who will read some sections orally to supplement the slower reader's own reading efforts. Or, a tape recorded reading of the novel can be available. Besides keeping up the pace of reading, the group can have informal discussions among themselves that can serve several purposes: to clarify details of the action that some readers may not have grasped in their individual reading; to paraphrase certain sections that may seem especially important to the story line; to react initially to the characters' actions, trying to discern and interpret motives and reactions. Since these discussions are not teacher-led and are governed in duration by available class time and the completion deadline, they are unlikely to seem intrusive in the reading process. And certainly, no quizzes or other artificial inducements to doing the reading should be used by the teacher. (If this non-coercive strategy sounds idealistic, given the reluctance of some high school students to do what is assigned, my response is that the teacher's refusal to coerce the reading of literature is preferable, in the long run, because it eliminates the stigma of reading simply to pass a test. Test-passing is not a valid goal for novice readers of literature.)

After introducing *The Red Badge of Courage* as the most famous novel about the Civil War, the teacher might also say that the novel is not written like a history of that war. "It is sub-titled 'An Episode of the American Civil War'; furthermore, the author first considered titling the book 'Private Fleming: His Various Battles.' So, we'll be reading a book with one central character, a young man who has just enlisted on the Union side the American Civil War. His name is Henry Fleming; he is still very young; he has defied his mother's wishes by enlisting to fight in a cause that consumed American

society in the early 1860's. Like 'The Coup de Grace,' this story can draw you into the feelings of the characters, and it may raise questions in your mind about how war affects the participants."

When the first reading of the novel has been completed by everyone, class discussion can begin. To stress that s/he wants students' responses to dominate these discussions, the teacher can have selected several passages to serve as successive focal points, with a guiding question or two to go with each. For example, "The last sentence of the novel refers to the sun: 'Over the river a golden ray of sun came through the hosts of leaden rain clouds.' By the time you got to that sentence, you had participated with Henry Fleming in a lot of conflicting reactions to the battle. At the end of the novel, does he seem to have made up his mind how he really feels about being in the war? How do you feel about his being in the war? Did you feel the same way throughout the book?" Not only is this set of questions likely to precipitate an examination of what may be the central purpose of the novel (and, of course, critics do not agree about what the central purpose is); it may also cause students to commit themselves about whether the ending is optimistic, pessimistic, or ironic. All of these interpretations are possible; discussion of support for each should be extremely productive so far as each reader's interaction with the novel is concerned. Note also that starting discussion about the end of the novel demonstrates the necessity of making an interpretation of the novel based on the whole.

Another question focus: "At the end of Chapter IX, this sentence occurs: 'The red sun was pasted in the sky like a fierce wafer.' Since we do not normally think of the sun as pasted in the sky nor do we usually speak of wafers as fierce, this sentence must have some unusual effect. How do you see it as fitting with the state of mind of Henry Fleming at that point in the novel? Is its possible meaning there the same as the meaning associated with the sun at the end of the novel? Why do you think those images might be more than just unimportant descriptions of the scene in the novel?"

A set of questions focused on Fleming's changes in attitude toward war and the readers' reactions to these changes seems essential to probing the book. "Early in Chapter IX, the author says Fleming 'wished that he, too, had a wound, a little red badge of courage.' That was before the raging soldier hit Fleming over the head with his rifle (in Chapter XII). Did that head wound serve him well as a badge of courage? What do you perceive as the dilemma that that incident puts him in for the rest of the novel? What are some of the other ways that he could have handled the aftermath of the incident?" These questions will cause attention of the readers to range widely over the whole novel, putting pieces together, assessing their significance, and articulating alternatives to behavior presented in the novel.

Since Crane's impressionistic techniques of writing are so noteworthy and are so likely to attract almost any reader's attention, other questions might focus on imagery and language. "Did you notice how often Crane referred to animals, especially to war as a monster? Skim the novel to find several examples, and let's read them again aloud. Are the feelings they arouse in you entirely negative? Or is there a quality that you might call beautiful about those images? What other comparisons can you think of for war (e.g., ocean tide, game, quest, theater)? When did you get the most vivid impressions of how it feels to be in a battle setting? Did the animal images help or hinder your feeling of participation?" The intent of these questions is to encourage attention and reaction to the sensuous texture of the language and to look for connections between language and the feelings aroused in readers. Since these feelings will not all be the same and will be expressed in different ways, the discussion can demonstrate that varying perceptions are expected. It may also demonstrate that Crane was consciously using a type of imagery, probably with the intent of shaping the reader's emotional response. The examination of alternative images may also raise the issue of trite ways of thinking and speaking about war, language that creates hackneyed images rather than fresh ones.

Writing should begin sometime before the discussion lags or becomes repetitive. The assignment should be stated so that students can build on or depart from the discussion, not simply reprocess it. Possibilities: "Pick out one question or statement from the novel that resembles a dilemma you have faced yourself, such as, 'How do you know you won't run when the time comes?' (Chapter II), or, 'He had a conviction that he would soon feel in his sore heart the barbed missiles of ridicule.' (Chapter XIII). In the form of a story, a letter to a friend, or an essay, try to show how you and the character in the novel faced a similar dilemma." Or, "Imagine Henry Fleming in conversation with his mother after he leaves service in the Union Army. What will he tell her, and what responses will she make? Write in dialogue."

The writing that results from topics like these will go through the same stages of drafting, sharing, and revising as those suggested for a short story. Since the time spent on the novel will have been greater, however, the writing about the novel may seem to take on greater significance. The teacher may want to encourage fuller probing of students' interpretations, more extended efforts to draw extensively from the text and to elaborate on responses. Offering such form options as a story or a letter to a friend may not explicitly suggest more concentrated or prolonged effort, though they may well engage the imagination in the writing with an intensity different from that ordinarily associated with the essay.

The sharing of finished stories, letters, essays, and dialogues should also serve as a climax of the novel-reading experience and probably as a means for synthesizing it—not to vote on the best interpretation but to savor the variety of interpretation.

For the teacher who practices a commitment to reader-response criticism, the relationships both to familiar literary texts and to students will undergo subtle changes. Those texts will be constantly recreated—always the same words but never the same characters or the same implications of those characters' actions. As successive students add their unique oral and written responses, which blend their own experiences with life outside books and texts they have never read before, the teacher may be constantly surprised. The text stays fresh, just as each class is a little different from the previous one. Students continue to amaze because each sees the text in a somewhat different way.

The types and roles of teacher-devised questions assume new significance. Questions designed to promote and extend comprehension are no less important than they have been for the teacher/authority, but they are always framed as probes, as starters for exploration rather than as occasions for mere recall or for testing attentiveness. And these questions aimed toward comprehension merge and interweave with questions that ask for first-person evaluation, for comparison with experience of other literary texts and with extra-literary experience. Further, such questions are not saved for the later stages of discussion but have their proper place throughout, the teacher demonstrating that a normal literary experience is not an escape from reality but an interpenetration of it. Personal meanings can suffuse every line or every chapter.

The teacher's armament of technical literary terms is likely to seem more like a bundle of little gifts—trinkets or lagniappe offered where they will seem to sharpen a perception, categorize an observation, give a cachet of expertness to understanding. Their appropriateness cannot be wholly predetermined nor will their usefulness be measurable by pencil and paper tests. If the terms have truly served their proper pedagogical purpose, they will enter subsequent conversations about literature with almost as much naturalness as will names of characters and places. The metalanguage of literature will not seem arcane.

And this commitment to nourishing each reader's response to literature will, of course, lead to pluralism of meanings. Does pluralism in this realm amount to anarchy? Perhaps it will seem so to a teacher who has principled resistance to overtly pronouncing on the rightness of interpretation. But unless that teacher carries reticence to an extreme—never venturing his or her own interpretation, never challenging a student's interpretation, never attempting to evaluate the plausibility of a student's judgment—

anarchy certainly need not be the outcome. Instead, what the teacher can demonstrate is the process of making a text into a classic: gathering and sifting the cumulative judgments of many readers, finally determining that a text has continuing relevance, earned admiration, a right to life in imagination.

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Author's Note: I acknowledge gratefully the comments on an earlier version of this article from two high school teachers: Nancy Jones (Interlake High School, Bellevue, WA) and Bob LeRoy (The Dunn School, Los Olivos, CA).

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Why We Should Keep Teaching *Huck*

Terrence D. Earls

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn has long been recognized as one of the great American novels. Nevertheless, many students may complete high school with little or no exposure to *Huck*. We English teachers need to decide: Given the various "problems" associated with teaching *Huck*, is it that important a novel? Does it deserve its reputation? How essential is it that we continue to teach it? We shall see that there are "problems" with teaching *Huck*, but that these in no way interfere with its greatness. There is, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, something truly basic in the novel.

There are numerous reasons why *Huck* may not be taught more frequently. Possibly, many of us feel, *Huck* is little more than a pleasant boys' adventure story. We have the picture of the barefoot boy with cheeks of tan floating down the Mississippi on a raft with Jim, his loyal Negro companion. Huck's adventures are made exciting by Twain's gifts as a humorous story teller and as a local-color writer. Yes, Twain is guilty of being humorous and colorful, but such does not seem to be the stuff of great literature. Furthermore, even the admirers of *Huck* admit that the latter half of the book is too episodic, containing too many incidents that seem told for their own sake rather than for the sake of the artistic structure of the novel. The impression that the book is only a superficial adventure story is strengthened by Twain himself, who attached a "Notice" before the first page of the novel: "Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."

Another reason for not teaching *Huck* has to do with the controversy the book engenders. There is something objectionable in the book for everyone. "Nigger" is used throughout the book. Furthermore, the picture we get of Jim, both at the beginning and the end of book, is stereotype of a lazy, superstitious, ignorant Black. We laugh *at* Jim.

Huck may also be objectionable to people with conservative tastes. The picture the book paints of America is not a pretty one. Organized religion is also criticized and ridiculed. Some people might particularly object to Huck's decision at a key point in the book: after a difficult struggle with his conscience, he decides that for him his behavior will be determined by what makes him feel good rather than what he has been taught by society and organized religion.

But if *Huck* were only an adventure story, and an amoral one at that, then some of the world's great writers would not find so much in it to admire. Hemingway, for example, claimed in *Green Hills of*

Africa that "all modern American literature came from one book called *Huckleberry Finn.*' Jorge Luis Borges, the eighty-three year old Argentinian giant of Latin American literature, claimed in a recent interview:

> "The first novel I ever read was Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn.* Then I went to history . . . then I went back to Twain's *Roughing It* and then *Life on the Mississippi* . . . I keep rereading him. Twain . . . I think I like him personally. I think of him as a friend, no?" (Mark Muro, Jorge Luis Borges, The Boston GLOBE, June 1, 1983. P. 58.)

The testimony of others, impressive as it is, is not sufficient to convince us that *Huck* should be taught. We need to look at the novel itself to see what is important, what is essential and basic, what is great, about *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

The novel opens with a unique, alive voice that creates a personal rapport between Huck and the reader:

> You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer;* but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied one time or another.

The above passage also establishes truth as the major theme of the novel. A number of incidents, ones many of us fondly remember, deal with the theme in a pleasant, comic manner. Other incidents, however, look critically at the truth of mid-nineteenth-century America. Too often, in Twain's view, religion, respectability, and society itself are seen as lies. Huck's journey in the novel, and our own journey as readers, is toward a realization of the lies that supposedly civilized people live. The greatness of the novel lies in the manner in which Huck, confronted with such lies, manages to maintain his own integrity, his own truth to himself.

The first chapters of the novel examine the truth of Huck's society in a light-hearted, humorous manner. Widow Douglas criticizes Huck for his smoking; taking snuff, however, is perfectly acceptable because, as Huck observes, "she done it herself." Miss Watson, after threatening Huck with going to the "bad place" if he doesn't behave, attempts to motivate Huck with a vision of the good place "where all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever." Huck, quite sensibly, fails to see the attractiveness of Miss Watson's view of heaven and hell for two reasons: since she intends to go to the good place, he can't see any advantage in going where she was going; he is further attracted to the bad place since she claims Tom Sawyer would go there and "I wanted him and me to be together."

Huck participates in a number of boyhood adventures with Tom. He joins Tom's gang who, in their fantasy, plan to rob and kill

people - except on Sunday because "it would be wicked to do it on Sunday." In Chapter 2 the boys play a joke on Jim that shows him as ignorant and superstitious. Influenced by Tom, Huck shows little concern that the joke is at Jim's expense and no inclination to treat Jim as an equal.

Huck, himself no angel, lies throughout the book. Often his lies are for the sake of convenience, and often these lies are delightful but transparent. An example occurs when Huck and Jim, floating down the river, face the necessity of "borrowing" food from nearby farms if they are to survive. Their solution is to lift chickens that "warn't roosting comfortable" and to make a list of some food they will never steal. Huck is satisfied when he and Jim decide to put crabapples and persimmons on the list: "We warn't feeling just right before that, but it was all comfortable now. I was glad the way it come out too, because crabapples ain't ever good, and the p'simmons wouldn't be ripe for two or three months yet."

In another incident Huck attempts to deceive a local lady into believing that he is a girl. He is outrageously inept, forgetting his name, attempting to thread a needle by moving the needle toward the thread, catching something in his lap by closing his legs, and throwing a piece of lead at a rat as only a boy could. (No, Twain was not liberated!)

Tom feels comfortable with the lies of his boyhood fantasies but never examines the lies beneath the surface of his society. He is too much a product of his society. Huck, who often remarks on his not being brought up right, faces a reality whose lies need to be confronted if he and Jim are to survive. Even at the beginning of the novel Huck feels uneasy about Tom's adventures. After one experience he recognizes "that stuff was only just one of Tom Sawyer's lies."

Huck becomes not the liar for the sake of convenience but the brilliant, moral liar in the Chapters 14 to 16, the central chapters of the novel. In these chapters Huck faces the central lie of the book: that Jim, because he is black, is an inferior sub-human. Huck is forced to decide whether to follow the dictates of his own conscience when it conflicts with the unequivocal teachings of society.

Early in the novel Huck gave his word (his truth) that he wouldn't turn Jim in. At that time Jim was little more than a stereotype to him, but for Huck giving his word was very important. Huck's concept of Jim, his realization of Jim's humanity, evolves in Chapters 14 to 16. In Chapter 14 Jim presents his delightfully unconventional insights into the truth behind the King Solomon story from the Bible and his comments on the absurdity of Frenchmen not speaking English. Huck recognizes Jim's intelligence, but only begrudgingly: "He had an uncommon level head for a nigger" and "You can't learn a nigger to argue." Clearly, Huck (influenced by

society) sees Jim as less than an equal, though his experience shows him Jim's intelligence.

The incidents in Chapter 15 force Huck to recognize the depth of feeling he has for Jim. His recognition is not intellectual, as it was in Chapter 14, but emotional. In the chapter he has played a practical joke on Jim by pretending that Jim had dreamed that the raft and the canoe had been separated. After Jim admits his confusion because it was "the powerfulest dream I ever see," Huck laughs at Jim and tells him that the separation really had taken place. Jim explodes in anger:

> En when I wake up en find you back ag'in, all safe en soun', de tears come, en I could 'a' got down on my knees en kiss yo' foot, I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is *trash;* en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed.

Huck must decide: is Jim still a slave, or is he now a friend? Will society dictate what he is to think and feel, or will the truth of his own experience, his own instinct? In any crucial situation in the novel Huck relies on his instinct, as he does here:

> It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterward, neither. I didn't do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn't done that one if I'd 'a' knowed it would make him feel that way.

Chapter 16 represents the culmination of Huck's struggle with his conscience regarding Jim. The weight of being responsible for Jim's escape finally has become too much for him, so he decides to do the right thing and turn Jim in. He tells Jim he is going to shore to see where Cairo (freedom) is. Huck's resolve to violate his own word and to turn in his friend is weakened as he pulls away from the raft. Jim calls out: "Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim."

When Huck soon meets up with two men searching for runaway slaves, he gives up trying to tell the "truth" about Jim by lying to the men that his companion on the raft is white. Since his friend's survival is at stake, Huck instinctually knows how to lie to protect Jim. He waits until the men, not believing him, began to paddle toward the raft before letting on that others have previously avoided the raft. He hesitates further when the men ask why: "It's the-a -the -well, it ain't anything much." Soon, of course, the men pull away, convinced that Huck is lying, and that the truth is that the rest of Huck's family on the raft is stricken with smallpox.

Huck, who had decided by his actions to follow his own conscience, nevertheless cannot escape feeling guilt: "I knowed very well I had done wrong." But he decides that no matter which way he

had behaved regarding Jim, he still would have felt bad: "Well, then, says I, what's the use you learning to do right when it's troublesome to do right, and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same?" His solution is to do whatever "come handiest at the time."

Huck's morality is not at the highest possible stage of moral development (if one will excuse the leap to the twentieth century and Lawrence Kohlberg). Huck's behavior is based on what feels good to him rather than on some higher reason such as an ethical principle. Though he is unable to escape his time, he nevertheless violates what is supposed to be a fundamental truth regarding the morality of slavery and every citizen's duty to uphold the law.

Jim could want no truer "fren" than Huck, yet Huck still believes in slavery. Fortunately for Jim, Huck acts not upon his beliefs but upon his instincts and feelings. Before we say that Huck should question society itself, let us acknowledge that it would strain our credence to imagine a boy his age, the product of no education or exposure to ideas outside his milieu, to question the fundamental beliefs of his society. No, Huck does not *say* that slavery is wrong, nor does he *say* that blacks are the equals of whites. Let us rejoice in the miracle that he *acts* upon the truth of both of these statements.

Chapters 14 to 16 occur early in the novel (*Huck* contains forty-three chapters), yet the novel reaches its moral intensity in the three chapters. The pattern of the remainder of the novel, consisting of a visit to the dangers on shore and a hasty departure to the freedom and peacefulness of the river, is repeated often in the remaining chapters. Each visit to the shore reveals the venality and corruption - the lies - of the supposed civilization there. Twain, despite his ability to entertain us with delightful incidents in these chapters, is thoroughly pessimistic in what he depicts. It is inevitable that he has Huck at the end of the novel reject the attempts to "sivilize" him because "I been there before." Huck lights out for the new territory.

The redeeming grace of Twain's vision in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is Huck himself, the young boy who, despite the lies of his society, is able to know, deep in his gut, the truth and to act upon it.

What is truly basic in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is Huck himself. Huck is a true American hero. He is pragmatic and romantic, mischievous and sensitive. He can lie with the best or worst of us, yet beneath all of his characteristics is a fundamental decency. He cares about others. He wants desperately to do the right thing. In the midst of so many sophisticated, educated, and civilized people in the novel, he is the moral touchstone. His values and his integrity define the ideal American. We can only wish that more of us were like him. Our reason for asking students to read

Huck is to instill in them the same wish and to hope that, in some of them, the wish will be fulfilled.

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Effective Ways to Build a Reading Environment

Nicholas P. Criscuolo

Walk into some English or reading classrooms and it hits you immediately. There might be a few posters hung on the bulletin board or school notices taped on a wall. There's little else. Words like stark and bleak come to mind. Hardly an environment that reaches out and appeals to the adolescent reader. Hardly an environment that is conducive to reading.

Elementary classrooms tend to be more attentive to the notion of building a reading environment than those found in many secondary classrooms. It is just as important—if not more so—to spruce up English and reading classrooms considering the alarmingly large number of students who are apathetic and reluctant to read. An inviting classroom environment isn't a cure-all by any means, but it certainly will help capture student interest and stimulate students to read willingly.

Can the situation be improved? Of course. It's not an expensive proposition. All it takes is a little creativity and ingenuity. Transform a drab classroom into one that's alive and see what happens. Utilize wasted space and spots in the room to convince the unconvinced to read. This article will present some effective ways to do just that.

1. **Book Nook**— You can get books, newspapers and magazines from your home library or from teachers who are willing to share theirs. You can also visit book fairs and second hand book stores where you can get books for a dime or quarter. Ask the industrial arts teacher to make some wall racks and possibly some spinners to display the books. Instead of only using the Dewey Decimal System, arrange books just as a book store owner would so that the attractive covers of these books are displayed.

2. **Tape Deck**— Secure a small space to store read-along tapes you make with your students. With the help of your better readers, tape excerpts from novels and have poor readers read along with the tapes. As an alternative to teacher-made tapes, students can make their own tapes by sharing experiences that have made an impact on them. The narration is written out by the teacher who returns it to the student who reads it as a narration from the tape.

3. **Rap Roundtable**— Place a small round-table in the room where interested students can share their reading experiences with others.

For stools, use empty wire spools of appropriate height. These spools can usually be secured free of charge from a wire factory and painted in bright colors by the students.

In order to lend direction to these rap sessions, select a topic of the week and encourage youngsters to bring in books, newspaper articles and other materials which deal with the topic. These reading materials can be placed in painted ice cream buckets and retrieved at the appropriate time.

4. **See Trees**— Take an empty coffee can, fill it with sand and plant a large tree branch with twigs. Using colored yarn, attach a paperback book to each twig. It's a visual, inviting reading harvest that allows the student to pluck a book from the twig for free reading.

5. **Contents Corner**— A reading list can be drawn up from student response to an interest questionnaire administered at the beginning of the school year or semester. Students can read any books they wish from the list; they might even wish to sign a pledge card to read a certain number of books during the year or semester.

Use topical devices close to the students' experiences e.g. a "Hit Parade of Books," "A Reading Diet," or "Reading Rainbows." To encourage a balanced reading diet, the teacher can give each student a variety of colored slips representing each type of book. As students read each type of book, they place the matching colored slip in book pockets located in Contents Corner.

6. **Table Top Acres**— Use different sources and interests of adolescents to lead into reading. Plants can be one of these "leads." Varieties of plants are labeled and displayed on tables. Make students responsible for plant care and books concerning plants are readily accessible. Students can refer to these books to determine the amount of sunlight each plant needs, water requirements, etc. They can also read to follow directions for making additional plants from cuttings.

7. **Picture Gallery**— Most teenagers own cameras. They can be encourage to take pictures of school activities e.g. school dances, sports events, and assemblies. They can write short commentaries to accompany each photo, and pin it to a bulletin board labeled "Picture Gallery" for their classmates to read.

8. **Poet's Podium**— There may be another Emily Dickinson or Robert Frost in your class. Discover student talent for writing poetry by asking students to write original poems or select a favorite poem from an anthology.

Secure a podium and ask students to sign up to read their poems. Poise and oral expression skills are developed as students learn to enjoy and share poetry.

New Haven Public Schools
New Haven, CT

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Applying Literary Devices and Techniques

James P. Rhinesmith

Projects which apply literary techniques and devices allow the student to gain a more concrete knowledge of such terms. Three approaches could be used: (1) A week could be reserved after the novel unit to allow students to complete the projects. Class time would be used to work on the projects, allowing homework time to be used to begin reading a novel, for book reports, etc. (2) The projects could be assigned as homework in conjunction with the novel unit. (3) The specific project could be used as an application after a reading which this illustrates. The following are examples of projects for a novel unit:

Novel Projects

Grading:
4 projects = C
5 projects = B
6 projects = A
less than 4 completed projects = D, F
+ or - depending on quality

Time:

One week in class.

1. Character
   Make up a fictitious family. Draw a family tree for this family and include at least three generations. Make up the people's names, dates of birth and death, and dates of marriage (if they married).
2. Plot
   For your fictitious family, (as outlined in #1 above) tell the story of one generation. Include for each person in this generation his origins, habits, occupation, how they lived, who they loved, and how they died. In effect, a story in two-three paragraphs about that generation.
3. Point of View
   The points of view (types of narrator) are:
   1st person, major character ("I")
   1st person, minor character ("I")
   detached, 3rd person ("he", or person's name)
   omniscient, 3rd person ("he", or person's name)
   Write two short paragraphs, each telling the same story from different points of view (out of the four above), and using the proper pronoun.

4. Setting

Pick two of these time periods and for each list 15 details which were typical of that time and what life was like then. The details may be about modes of dress, speech, manner, architecture, transportation, food, hobbies, occupations, etc.

1950's	1800's	Roman Era
1930's	1700's	Greek Era
1920's	Renaissance	Egyptian Era
1900's	Middle Ages	

5. Theme

Themes are generalized ideas which sum up the action and tell an idea about life. After reading any literature, a person can derive a general idea about life which the literature has brought out. Below are listed twelve common sayings which are often found as morals or themes in literature. Pick any two and write a short paragraph for each which brings out this moral:

The good die young.
Haste makes waste.
Into each life some rain must fall.
Tragedies occur in three's.
The grass is always greener in a neighbor's yard.
People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.
Look before you leap.
Still waters run deep.
A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
A stitch in time saves nine.
The sins of the father are visited upon the son.
Don't throw good money after bad.

6. Plot - each story written will count as one project.

Finish one or more of these, some are true:

1. LOS ANGELES (AP) — Pamela Segara was just walking along a downtown street when a running man thrust a brown paper bag into her hands and said, "Take this!"

2. One evening as I was walking down the street, I had the feeling I was being followed. If I walked faster, the steps I heard behind me came faster. If I slowed my pace, the steps behind me slowed. A sense of fear grew inside me. Finally, I turned around to see who was following me, and my fear turned to panic.

3. I had not seen my brother (sister) in twenty years, since we were separated shortly after being born. I could remember the orphanage where I had grown up. Today, my brother (sister) who I had located after all these years would come to visit. I didn't know what to expect. Then the doorbell rang.

4. Blind since birth, I never thought the operation would be a success. Slowly, the doctor removed the bandages. A miracle. I could see! The first thing I saw was . . .

5. Again he looked at the knife. Would he have enough nerve to . . .

6. The man she loved held her closely. Her mind blazed with thoughts of marriage and children, a home together and love. Then he said, "I can never love you because . . ."

7. She swam toward the lifeboat, remembering the horror of the cruise ship as it sank the night before. With her last strength she reach the side of the lifeboat, the people inside . . .

8. They stood together in each other's arms at the edge of the cliff looking out at the spectacular sunset. As the sun went down behind the mountains, he suddenly . . .

9. Make up your own short story.

7. Style

Change a familiar fairy tale or children's story into a different style by writing the story as it would be handled by a newspaper today:

HOGG BROTHERS LOOSE HOMES IN TORNADO

Pigland (AP) — Squiggy and Piggy Hogg were the victims of a peculiar tornado today which was apparently the work of the mad scientist, Dr. Wolf. Dr. Wolf's plan to "blow the Hogg brother away" failed against the third of the Hogg brothers, Giggy, whose brick house withstood the bizzarre tornado.

LOCAL BEAUTY COMMITTED TO ASYLUM

Prince's Kingdom (UPI) - Cindy Rella, step-sister of the fatherless Rella family showed up at a posh party at the Castle Disco claiming she had been abducted in a pumpkin pulled by mice. Such delusions led a team of psychiatrists to commit her for further testing.

Other possibilities:

Puss 'n' Boots
Little Miss Muffet
Jack and Jill
Little Red Riding Hood
Jack Sprat
Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater
Jack Be Nimble

New Britain High School
New Britain, CT

Information for Authors:

The Leaflet is published three times a year by the New England Association of Teachers of English, and prints articles on all facets and levels of English/Language Arts teaching. Now in its 83rd year, *The Leaflet* is the oldest of the journals dedicated to the teaching of English.

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